

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6083

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

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AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJ: THE DIRG STRIKES BACK--THE ZEMETCHA EXTENDED

REF: ADDIS 10258 AND PREVIOUS

1. ETHIOPIAN MEDIA OF AUGUST 26 AND 27 HEADLINED THE EPM'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE NATIONAL WORK CAMPAIGN (ZEMETCHA) PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE THEIR SERVICE EXTENDED TO JUNE 1976. THE ANNOUNCEMENT WARNED THAT THOSE WHO FAIL TO CARRY OUT THEIR NATIONAL OBLIGATION WILL BE PROSECUTED, AND POINTED OUT THAT PARTICIPANTS ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM CRIMINAL CHARGES AND THE ENSUING PUNISHMENT.

2. AFTER WARNING PARTICIPANTS, PROCLAMATION COMMENDED ZEMATCHOCH FOR THEIR "SPLENDID EFFORTS" IN IMPLEMENTING LAND REFORM PROCLAMATIONS AND TERMED CAMPAIGNERS "TRUE FRIENDS OF THE LONG-OPPRESSED MASSES AND PREACHERS OF UNITY AND EQUALITY."

3. THE ANNOUNCEMENT ALSO JUSTIFIED EXTENSION OF ZEMETCHA BY
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POINTING OUT THAT THE NEW CURRICULUM FOR THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

HAS NOT YET BEEN COMPLETED AND WILL NOT BE READY FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE 1975-76 ACADEMIC YEAR. FINALLY, THE STATEMENT NOTED THAT BECAUSE OF "LACK OF TIME" AND SCARCITY OF TRANSPORTATION, MOST CAMPAIGN PARTICIPANTS WERE UNABLE TO REACH THEIR RESPECTIVE CAMPAIGN DISTRICTS "IN TIME TO COMPLETE THEIR ASSIGNMENTS."

4. ON A RELATED MATTER, GOVERNMENT MEDIA INDICATED THAT EFFORTS ARE CONTINUING TO DETERMINE THE "TROUBLEMAKERS" AMONG ARRESTED ZEMATCHOCH (SEE REFTEL). PARENTS OF ARRESTED ZEMATCHOCH HAVE BEEN WARNED NOT TO PETITION FOR CLEMENCY FOR THEIR CHILDREN WHEN THEY GET INTO TROUBLE AS THIS IS "TANTAMOUNT TO ENCOURAGING LAWLESSNESS." THE GOVERNMENT REITERATED THAT THOSE STUDENTS NOT INVOLVED IN ILLEGAL ACTS WILL BE RELEASED WHEN THE INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETE.

5. RE DETAINED ZEMATCHOCH, THE EMBASSY HAS TWO REPORTS OF UNKNOWN RELIABILITY SOURCED TO MENELIK II HOSPITAL INDICATING THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS (BETWEEN 40 AND 150 OUR SOURCES SAY) WERE TREATED THERE ON AUGUST 26 FOR INJURIES SUFFERED WHEN THEY WERE ARRESTED.

6. COMMENT: ROUNDS ONE AND TWO GO TO THE DIRG FOR DECISIVE ACTION IN ROUNDING UP POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKERS, AND FOR ITS STRONG COUNTER ATTACK IN EXTENDING RURAL SERVICE. IT HAS LONG BEEN RUMORED THAT THE ZEMETCHA WOULD BE EXTENDED AN PARADOXICALLY, EVEN THOUGH ZEMATCHOCH WILL GREATLY RESENT THIS EXTENSION, THIS MAY BE OUTWEIGHED BY THEIR RELIEF THAT, FOR THE FIRST TIME, A DEADLINE HAS BEEN SET ON THAT SERVICE. IT APPEARS TO US THAT THE DIRG, IN ITS MASS ARRESTS, MAY HAVE SUCCESSFULLY INTIMIDATED THE RETURNED CAMPAIGNERS, WHO SEEM TO HAVE DISAPPEARED FROM THE STREETS OF ADDIS ABABA. ITS TOUGH MEASURES HAVE NOT BEEN WITHOUT COST, HOWEVER, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF LOSS OF PUBLIC SYMPATHY FOR THE DIRG AND AN INCREASE IN SUPPORT FOR THE "UNDERDOG STUDENTS." SOME PEOPLE STILL REMEMBER THE DIRG'S EARLIER PAEANS OF PRAISE TO THE STUDENT MOVEMENT WHICH WAS CREDITED WITH LEADING THE MOVEMENT TO OVERTHROW A TYRANNICAL GOVERNMENT AND DRAW PARALLELS TO THE PRESENT SITUATION. UNLESS THE STUDENTS HAVE THE BACKING OF ORGANIZED LABOR AND THE TEACHERS ASSOCIATIONS, HOWEVER, THEIR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROTEST IS LIKELY TO BE RELATIVELY INEFFECTIVE. ETHIOPIAN ETHIOPIAN STUDENTS, EVEN THOSE ARMED WITH THE THOUGHTS OF CHAIRMAN MAO, HAVE , HISTORICALLY, NOT DONE WELL AGAINST CONVENTIONALLY-ARMED SOLDIERS/POLICE WHO HAVE A LONG AND SUCCESSFUL RECORD OF KNOCKING STUDENT HEADS TOGETHER. THERE IS ALWAYS THE DANGER, OF COURSE, THAT TOO MUCH VIOLENCE APPLIED AGAINST STUDENTS MAY BACKFIRE BY MOBILIZING PUBLIC SYMPATHY BEHIND THE STUDENTS, THEREBY WINNING THE BATTLE AND LOSING THE

WAR. FOR NOW, HOWEVER, STUDENTS HAVE DRAMATIZED THEIR
OPPOSITION TO THE DIRG, WHICH THEY CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE
AMONG THE COUNTRY FOLK DURING THEIR REMAINING SERVICE. THE
DIRG, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS DEMONSTRATED ITS ABILITY AND
DETERMINATION TO SUPPRESS STUDENT OPPOSITION. END COMMENT.
HUMMEL

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